

Essay Titles: Writing Instruction, Action, Process or Task Words and Their Meaning

In the essay titles there are words (instruction, action, process or task words) which tells you what your answer has to "do". They are often present in reports and other academic writings as well.

Common instruction, action, process or task words in essays:

Account for

Give the reason for, explain and clarify. Not to be confused with 'Give an account of ' which is only asking for a description.

Analyse

Describe the main ideas in depth, break down into component parts, show why they are important and how they relate to each other.

Argue

Make a case for and against, draw on evidence and expert opinion (what published writers or experts say).

Assess

Weight up the importance, evidence and expert opinion (what published writers or experts say). Discuss the strong and weak points of the subject. Put your own judgement clearly in the conclusion.

Comment

State views on the subject clearly, provide explanation, backed up with sufficient evidence, expert opinion (what published writers or experts say) and examples.

Compare

Discuss things in relation to each other. Look for similarities and differences.

Contrast

Discuss how the subjects are different.

Criticise

Discuss opinions and judgement about the merit of theories and facts in the light of evidence and different points of view.

Debate

Present different point of view, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of each and their relation to each other.

Define

Give clear, concise meanings. State limitations of the definition.

Describe

Give a detailed or graphic account of the topic.

Discuss

Give reasons for and against; outline competing points of view; examine the implications; draw on evidence.

Distinguish

Draw out differences between

Evaluate

Weigh things up, look at the strengths and weaknesses and assess it in the light of evidence and expert opinion (what published writers or experts say)

Examine

Look closely at all aspects and draw on evidence

Explain

Outline and give reasons for something (how? why?)

Illustrate

Make clear by the use of examples or diagrams to show (how it works or describe a situation); clarify points.

Interpret

Express in simple terms. You are usually expected to include your own judgements.

Justify

Show adequate ground for decisions, conclusions, ideas and theories based on evidence and expert opinion.

Outline

Give the main features or general principles of a subject – should not include all the details.

Prove

Establish that something is 'true' by presenting factual evidence or giving clear, logical reasons.

Present

Set out

Relate

Show how things are connected to each other; how they affect each other.

Review

Outline key features and consider strengths and weaknesses.

State

Set out clearly; present brief, clear information.

Summarise

Give a concise and clear account of the main points – should not include details.

Trace

Identify key stages and follow the development of a something.

To what extent...

Another way of saying evaluate but suggests that you bring out how much (or how little)

www.holyglobe.com